

VZCZCXRO1763
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHAN #1380/01 3451429
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 111429Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3994
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0760
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 001380

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/FO, INR/AA, AND DRL
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [MA](#)
SUBJECT: HIGH COURT MUST CERTIFY RAVALOMANANA VICTORY

REF: ANTANANARIVO 1372 AND PREVIOUS

ANTANANARI 00001380 001.2 OF 002

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The unofficial Ministry of Interior vote count concluded December 10 with candidate and President Marc Ravalomanana winning 54.8 percent. On cue his nearest challenger, Jean Lahiniriko, publicly denounced the legitimacy of the election and made numerous claims of fraud. Police continued to search the homes of several opposition politicians suspected of supporting violent actions, including those of renegade General Fidy. The High Constitutional Court must certify the official results and hopes to do so within a week. END SUMMARY.

First Round Victory Awaits High Court Approval

12. (U) Exactly one week after election day, the Ministry of Interior completed December 10 its unofficial compilation of results from the presidential election (reftels). With all 17,581 polling stations reporting, representing 7.36 million registered voters and 4.43 million valid votes cast, the results showed a 61.45 percent turnout. President Ravalomanana won 2.43 million votes for 54.8 percent based on this unofficial tally, with Jean Lahiniriko second at 11.68 percent, Roland Ratsiraka third at 10.09 percent, and Herizo Razafimhaleo fourth at 9.05 percent. None of the other 10 candidates earned even five percent. The relative speed with which the unofficial vote count was completed -- a process that in the past has taken six weeks -- was thanks to a mass communication effort by the Interior Ministry. GOM officials hope the assistance of South African helicopters and airplanes in transporting affidavits and ballots from remote regions to vote counting centers and on to the High Constitutional Court (HCC) will speed the official result announcement as well.

Waiting For The Official Vote Count

13. (SBU) All attention now turns to the HCC which must compile and certify the results from 116 regional districts where polling station results were collected last week. As of midday December 11, the HCC had 100 files of the 116 total. HCC President Jean Michel Rajaonarivony has been reluctant to say publicly when he will make a final announcement, but shared with the Ambassador December 11 that it is possible they may have a final tally as early as December 15, depending on the number of material errors that need to be reconciled in each district's file. Candidate delegates, media, and accredited observers are all allowed to visit the HCC to monitor the count.

Lahiniriko Cries Foul

¶4. (SBU) Candidate Jean Lahiniriko predictably filed two depositions at the HCC generally contesting the legitimacy of the elections and calling on all election observers to pool their results for an alternate vote count. HCC President Rajaonarivony emphasized he would take all candidates' complaints seriously, but said there was little he could do in the absence of any concrete evidence. To date, according to Rajaonarivony, Lahiniriko has failed to make any specific or detailed claims of fraud that can be narrowed down to particular polling stations, officials, or other individuals. The HCC addresses claims, he concluded, but does not have the resources to conduct a thorough investigation and wholesale audit of the entire election process if the candidate does not do some of the initial legwork.

¶5. (SBU) In public statements Lahiniriko was equally vague in his allegations but also quite inflammatory, calling for the "forces vives" (intellectual elites) of Madagascar to "take over and organize new elections in order to avoid bloodshed."

House Searches

¶6. (U) On December 8, the national radio broadcast a government statement notifying the public the police will conduct nationwide house searches following recent arrest warrants and asking people to remain calm. With this "general search warrant," security forces proceeded immediately to search the homes of a number of people suspected of having connections to renegade coup-plotter General Fidy and his ally the presidential candidate Pety Rakotoniaina. Most notably, investigators reportedly found and confiscated 15 grenades, some detonators, and "important documents" from the home of elderly former President Albert Zafy. Police also raided the

ANTANANARI 00001380 002.2 OF 002

home of Jacques Raharinirina, Director of Communications for candidate/fugitive Pety Rakotoniaina, reportedly seizing documents relating to their "Tambatra" political movement as well as papers about "Chinese and Pakistani investment activities."

COMMENT:

¶7. (SBU) Whether or not the HCC announces results similar to the Interior Ministry, several opposition members will continue to make vague allegations of widespread fraud. If Ravalomanana's total drops below 50 percent, Lahiniriko would face him in a run-off -- which explains the latter's somewhat desperate allegations. If the HCC results bring Ravalomanana's total much below 54.8 percent, the allegations of fraud -- for which we have seen no evidence -- may gain traction with the Malagasy public. END COMMENT.

MCGEE